

Senate Leadership Structure: Overview of Party Organization

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Summary

Each Congress, Senators meet to organize the chamber and select their party leaders. In addition to the majority and minority leaders and party whips are numerous entities created by the party to assist with the work of the party.

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Democrats

Democratic Conference: The conference is the caucus of all Democratic Senators and serves as the central coordinating body. It operates through the Democratic leader's office and is responsible for communicating the party's message. The Democratic leader serves as chair of the conference, which is also led by a vice-chair and a secretary.

Democratic Policy Committee: The policy committee is responsible for the formulation of overall legislative policy. It provides background and analysis of pending legislation, and organizes briefings and strategy meetings for Democratic Members and staff. The policy committee is led by a chair, appointed by the Democratic leader and includes regional chairs and members.

Democratic Steering and Outreach Committee: Often referred to as the steering committee, this group maintains liaison between the Democratic leadership and Democratic elected officials around the country. It also is responsible for making committee assignment recommendations. It is led by a chair, appointed by the Democratic leader, who is assisted by an executive committee.

Democratic Committee on Committee Outreach: This group provides a voice in the Democratic leadership for committee chairs. An appointed chair and vice-chair coordinate the committee work.

Democratic Committee on Rural Outreach: This group guides rural outreach and tries to find new ways to reach rural, suburban, and ex-urban communities. It is led by an appointed chair.

Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee: This panel is the fund-raising arm of the Senate Democrats that provides financial and research assistance to Democratic Senators seeking reelection and to non-incumbent Democratic Senate nominees. It is led by a chair appointed by the Democratic leader, vice-chair, treasurer, and a board of trustees.

Republicans

Republican Conference: The Republican Conference is the organizational vehicle for Republican Members and their staff. It hosts periodic meetings of Senate Republicans and is the primary vehicle for communicating the party's message. The conference is led by an elected chair and vice-chair.

Republican Policy Committee: The policy committee assists Senate leaders and committee chairs in designing, developing, and executing policy ideas. The policy committee hosts a weekly lunch meeting of Republican Senators and provides summaries of major bills and amendments, prepares analyses of rollcall votes, and distributes issue papers. It is led by an elected chair, and comprises members of the party leadership, the chairs of selected committees, and members designated by the Republican leader to serve on an executive committee.

Republican Steering Committee: The steering committee is responsible for making committee assignment recommendations. It is led by a chair appointed by the Republican leader and an executive committee.

Republican Senatorial Committee: The campaign committee oversees the political and fund-raising efforts of Senate Republicans. It is led by a chair appointed by the Republican leader and an executive committee.

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